

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 21, 2017

Governor Rick Snyder
Executive Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Governor Snyder:

We write to you in regards to the announcement by your School Reform Office (SRO) that it will potentially be closing 38 schools across Michigan this year. We ask that you ensure these schools are not closed without consultation and support from the local community.

On December 10, 2015, President Barack Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). When this bill passed Congress, it had overwhelming bipartisan support. ESSA requires states to work together with school districts, in a collaborative manner, to create a plan on the best ways to educate their students. With these potential school closings, the SRO contradicts this new law and is using the state's authority to force school closures upon local communities without their support.

When closing a school, since it is often irreversible, the full consequences of that closure must be considered. Closing a school forces kids to attend a school outside their community, creating many problems for both students and parents. In one instance, the SRO suggested that children in River Rouge, Mich., travel as far as 45 miles one way to find a new school. This would create incredible burdens on working parents and students, especially those who depend on public transportation to attend school.

Closing schools also removes an anchor institution from a community. One of the schools that the SRO is considering closing, Saginaw High School, houses a school-based health center that provides students access to health care. If Saginaw High School were to close, the SRO has given no indication of what would happen to such resources for children currently available in their schools.

By closing schools without providing the resources they need to improve performance, the SRO is setting Michigan schools up for failure. State cuts to public education mean that Michigan fails to properly invest in K-12 education. All kids deserve great schools. The answer is not to close schools, but to invest in what works – smaller class sizes, better instructional material and support for professional staff. Simply put, the state is not providing many of these schools, especially in low-income areas, with the resources they need to educate our children.

It appears that the SRO has not considered many of these factors that will have negative impacts on our children's education and our communities. We ask that the state not close any schools without consultation and input from the local community. Not only is that type of collaboration required by federal law, it is also what local parents are demanding and what is best for our children. The state must stop looking at children as numbers on a spreadsheet and provide struggling schools with the funding to escape the cycle of continual low performance. These closings are a short-sighted measure that will have detrimental impacts on students, families and communities.

Sincerely,



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MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Sander M. Levin
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